

1. INTRODUCTION

The objective of publishing and distributing this Guide is to help reduce and prevent losses of life, property and natural resources from wildfire in the Urban-Wildland Interface. Loss reduction can be achieved partly through proper implementation and enforcement of fire hazard zoning and mitigation laws. This document discusses those types of laws that are state mandated.

Fire hazard zoning is one of the first steps in a comprehensive land use plan. It can also help local agencies to educate the public about wildfire hazards. By zoning fire hazards, policy makers acknowledge that there is a wildfire problem in the area that needs to be mitigated. This is also a way to make the public aware that they need to take certain measures in order to protect themselves from losses. These measures cannot be carried out without the cooperation and support of the community. Even though homeowners may want to choose for themselves how or even if mitigation should be undertaken, the minimum fire safe standards discussed here are laws, and there is a demonstrated need for their implementation and enforcement. In learning why fire hazard zoning is important to them, the public can realize that the prime responsibilities—and opportunities—for hazard mitigation are theirs. This public support of fire hazard zoning and mitigation practices can help in many ways, especially by addressing certain problems and concerns prior to implementation.

This Guide covers fire hazard zoning in the state of California, in both [State Responsibility Area](#) (SRA) and [Local Responsibility Area](#) (LRA) lands. It discusses how and why state mandated fire hazard zoning and mitigation strategies have been enacted, and it attempts to clarify some aspects of the process about which questions have often been raised. This Guide also described various [fire hazard assessment](#) and [classification](#) systems that can be used in California by local agencies or other entities. This Guide will be a tool for fire agency personnel and local land use planners who are involved in the creation and implementation of local fire hazard zoning strategies, including 1) assessment of hazards, 2) mapping options, 3) drafting of ordinances, 4) engaging community support, 5) funding options, 6) enforcement, and 7) standards and regulations.

The uses for fire hazard zoning are many. Once fire hazards have been classified, zoning allows local planners to implement land use standards that agree with the state legislature's mandates. These standards can apply to various aspects of land use, including but not limited to 1) [structural components](#) such as roofing, 2) [defensible space](#) standards such as vegetative clearance around structures, 3) [infrastructure](#) such as fire apparatus access and water supplies, and 4) preventative [land use planning](#) such as greenbelts and fuel breaks. Fire hazard zoning is also an effective tool for [public education](#) and awareness. By publicizing fire hazard zoning information, local planners can help educate property owners about their values at risk from wildfire and the options available to them for reducing hazards.

Information about [Natural Hazard Disclosure](#) (NHD) in the SRA and the LRA is also covered in this Guide, as it is closely related to fire hazard zoning. As a result, this Guide may be of use to real estate agents and disclosure firms that should be abreast of these regulations. It is also useful for fire agency personnel to be informed about NHD since related questions may arise from local property owners.

It is now the responsibility of local planners and those who implement fire safe regulations to apply these strategies using common sense. This guide will assist in implementation and help promote positive action.